# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
## CONFERENCE CALL

November 15, 2006 Meeting

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Harkless
Notes: Erin Halton

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

**Albeni Falls / Lake Pend Oreille**

Russ Kiefer, IDFG, reported that 1700 adult Kokane had been counted and were spawning in Lake Pend Oreille earlier and at shallower elevations than expected. IDFG requested that the COE maintain the lake's elevation within a range of 2052.3' – 2052.8', to avoid de-watering eggs in the area. IDFG recognized that it may be difficult for the COE to hit/maintain the target, given the challenges of going off freeflow (releasing as much water as possible from the project with no generation) and transitioning to a generation only operation, and clarified that the objective is to hold the lake within a .5' range and as close to the current elevation as possible.

**Action/Next Steps:** The COE will hold Lake Pend Oreille as steady as possible, and as close to a 2052.3' – 2052.8' range, through the peak spawning period which ends 12/31, and then shift to a range of 1' starting 1/1.

**Chum Update**

Rick Kruger, ODFW, reported on results from the chum spawning posted on the TMT website. As of 11/14, 22 new redds had been counted. Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, said that the current operation is a minimum tailwater of 13' around the clock and that flows were starting to recede. TMT members discussed what elevation range and time periods for those ranges would be best for all interests, for the near term. Interests expresses were: holding a steady elevation as long as possible during the day, and maintaining a steady operation longer-term for chum throughout their spawning period. All agreed to a short-term operation of maintaining a 12' – 12.5' range as long as possible between the hours of 7 a.m. – 5 p.m..

**Action/Next Steps:** An email was sent out to TMT by Hlebechuk following the conference call:

*Short summary of [11/15] TMT conference call: The river flows are coming down and hopefully will continue to do so barring any significant rain events. Salmon Managers recommended holding tailwater 12' – 12.5' starting at 0700 hours in the morning and remaining in this range as long as possible, preferably until 1700 hours. This operation is currently in effect.*
*TMT agreed a check in was in order after the chum survey. Conference call is set for Friday, Nov 17 at 1530 hours (3 p.m.). Call in number 503/808-5190.*

**Dworshak Under/Overshot Mode**

Laura Hamilton, COE, reported that Dworshak was currently operating in undershot mode and temperature was at 47°. Hamilton asked TMT members to clarify what temperature was desirable. Dave Wills, USFWS, noted that in his prior phone conversation with Jim Adams, COE, a shift to overshot mode would likely increase temperatures to 53-54°. Wills stated that as such, from the hatchery's perspective, maintaining undershot mode and a temperature of 47° was desired. Robin MacKay, BPA, noted that the big unit is out at Dworshak, which may pose a challenge to making a switch to overshot mode.

**Action/Next Steps:** TMT will receive a Dworshak update at the 11/17 conference call.

**Next TMT Conference Call, November 17th, 3:30 p.m.**

Agenda Items Include:

- Chum Operations Update including 11/17 survey results
- Dworshak selector gate update

# Technical Management Team Conference Call Notes

November 15, 2007

### *1. Greetings and Introductions.*

The November 15 Technical Management Team conference call was chaired by Cathy Hlebechuk and facilitated by Robin Harkless. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Hlebechuk at 503-808-3942.

### *2. Chum Update.*

The most recent survey results are hot-linked to today's agenda on the TMT homepage. Rick Kruger said 22 new chum redds were found yesterday – 2 in section 1, upstream of Hamilton Creek, and 20 in section 3, between Hamilton Creek channel and Ives Island. Seven of the new redds are above the 12.5-foot elevation, he said. There was some standing and flowing water keeping those redds wetted, he added. Water visibility was 30 inches, compared to 2 inches last week, Kruger added.

Hlebechuk said the current operation is a minimum tailwater depth of 13 feet around the clock. Bonneville inflows are receding, and we hope to be able to start doing a lower tailwater elevation soon, though likely not for the full 12-hour period. Inflows to Bonneville have been in the 140-160 Kcfs range, she added. If

inflows stay at 160 Kcfs, we will be able to hold a 12.5-foot tailwater for six hours with current Willamette River and tidal backwater affects; if they're 140 Kcfs, we can hold the 12.5-foot tailwater elevation for just over 11 hours. Currently we need to discharge about 90 Kcfs to hold a 12.5-foot tailwater; we need to release 180 Kcfs (full powerhouse) at night, producing a tailwater depth of 17 feet, the rest of the time. As the Willamette River and local flows recede the project will gradually increase outflows to maintain a 12 – 12.5 foot tailwater.

Holding a given elevation for just six hours is a problem, said Kruger – whatever tailwater elevation is chosen, we need to hold it throughout the entire daylight period, because six hours is not enough time for these fish to spawn successfully. Paul Wagner noted that, based on last year's study, Ken Tiffan found that the chum generally maintained their position, even at higher flows. True, said Tiffan, but higher flows correlated with a decrease in spawning activity – the fish would try to stick with their redd for as long as possible, but they weren't usually able to complete their redd when flows were high. In response to another question, Tiffan noted that, while elevations have been high, velocities have been relatively low due to a backwater effect.

What do the salmon managers recommend at today's meeting? Hlebechuk asked. Should we set up an interim operation until the next TMT meeting? If we have 150 Kcfs coming in, we could set up an operation during daylight hours that would produce a tailwater depth of 12.5 feet for 8 hours, then go to a 17-foot depth for the other 16 hours, she said. Once inflows hit 140 Kcfs, again, we think we can hold the 12.5-foot depth for about 11 hours out of the day, said Hlebechuk, and we may well be at 140 Kcfs soon, because local flows are falling off. It all depends on what happens with the rain for the next few days.

Wagner said that, from his perspective, he is concerned because the long-term forecasts for Dworshak and Libby are 85 and 90 percent of average, respectively. Short-term, we have abundance, he said, and I would support adopting a 12-foot tailwater depth for now. If you look at historic spawning data, we're getting into the peak timing of chum spawning, said Wills. It begins now and could last for several weeks. I would hate to see us initiate a bunch of spawning at high elevations, then not be able to support those redds later. The Fish and Wildlife Service's preference would be to establish a tailwater depth no higher than 12 feet at this point, during daylight hours. Robin MacKay said that, based on the current flow data, it would be possible to maintain a 12-12.5-foot tailwater depth starting at 7 a.m. and lasting as long as possible, at this point. Wagner said his preference would be to start at 7 or 8 a.m. and maintain this until 5 p.m. if possible. This would provide adequate coverage of the spawning areas for now.

Ultimately, it was agreed that the action agencies will maintain a target tailwater depth of 12-12.5 feet, beginning at 7 a.m., for as long as possible during daylight hours; the group will continue to watch the flow situation at Bonneville in

the hopes that the hours of 12-12.5-foot tailwater elevation can be extended as flows continue to drop. MacKay clarified that for BPA this is a short-term operation, and will be maintained only as long as it takes to get past the current flow/precipitation situation in the basin – after that, the tailwater elevation at Bonneville will be going down. Tony Norris said Reclamation agrees with BPA's assessment. Kiefer said he will need to wait and see what upcoming surveys show in terms of redd depth, before agreeing with MacKay's statement. Hlebechuk noted that, with Grand Coulee full, the Corps/RFC model is predicting continued high flows, in the 140 Kcfs range, through the end of December. Robyn MacKay said BPA models are showing lower flows than that.

It was agreed that it would be prudent to convene a TMT conference call this Friday, November 17, to check in on this operation.

***3. Albeni Falls Update.***

Kiefer said he had received an email yesterday from researchers at Lake Pend Oreille saying they had been seeing a lot more kokanee spawners than expected, earlier expected. The kokanee are spawning in pretty shallow depths, he said. Once I saw the photos, I contacted the other TMT representatives, and IDFG policy folks, and what we're going to request is that the Corps maintain the current Albeni Falls elevation, Kiefer said. We're expecting to see a high number of eggs per female due to good feeding conditions, he said, so we don't want to jeopardize those shallow redds. I believe the current elevation is about 2052.3 feet, he said, so we're requesting that the action agencies hold the winter elevation at Albeni Falls at a range of 2052.3-2052.8 feet. My understanding is that they have gone to a free flow (spill only), he said, which may make it a little difficult to hit that elevation range exactly as flows recede and the project returns to a generating operation, Kiefer said. We understand that that is a difficult operation, and appreciate the operators' skill in maintaining it.

Mike Deegan, Albeni Falls operator, confirmed that the current elevation at Albeni Falls is just under 2052.3 feet. Kiefer said the researchers have counted 1,700 adult kokanee to date, more than expected. In response to a question, Kiefer said the original SOR requested an Albeni Falls elevation of 2051 by November 20. In most years, very little kokanee spawning is seen before that date, Kiefer explained – the goal of the lower lake elevation, again, was to detrimentally impact the earlier lake trout spawning by desiccating eggs deposited higher on the shoreline. In response to a question, Hlebechuk said the purpose of the current free flow operation at Albeni Falls is to get more water out than is possible when the project is generating, because of the recent precipitation events in the basin. I believe we will be on free-flow at Albeni Falls for a few more days, said Jeff Laufle, Seattle District Corps of Engineers biologist.

Hlebechuk said the Corps will do its best to maintain a stable elevation at Albeni Falls, but with the rain coming in, it may be difficult to hold the project to such a narrow elevation range. Is 2052-2052.5 feet a reasonable elevation, or do you want us to stick as closely as we can to the 2052.3-2052.8 range rather than trying to hold you to specific elevation targets, I would prefer to describe the biological objectives we're trying to achieve, said Kiefer – if we can set 2052 as the bottom elevation, I don't think that will have a detrimental biological impact.

After a few minutes of further discussion, Kiefer said once the elevation is stabilized, even at 2052, as long as the action agencies can hold an operating range of 0.5 feet, that is acceptable to Idaho. Ultimately, Hlebechuk said the Corps will attempt to maintain an operating range of 2052.3-2052.8 feet, realizing that it may be necessary to go outside that range as things settle out. Once the system settles down, we will set a minimum elevation and operate withing half a foot until the beginning of January, Hlebechuk said. That would be acceptable, said Kiefer.

***4. Dworshak Update.***

Laura Hamilton asked the TMT what release temperature they would prefer to see from Dworshak at this point in the season. Wills said he had discussed this question with Jim Adams; the bottom line is that the salmon managers would prefer to see Dworshak operate in undershot mode from here on out, to produce a release temperature of about 47 degrees F, rather than the 53 degrees F. we would see in overshot mode. My understanding is that the project is now operating in undershot mode, and that is fine for now, said Wills – we can revisit this in a couple of weeks.

***5. Next TMT Meeting Date.***

The next face to face meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, November 22. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

TMT Participant List
November 15, 2006

| Name | Affiliation |
|---|---|
| Laura Hamilton | COE |
| Rick Kruger | ODFW |
| Robin Harkless | Facilitation Team |
| David Wills | USFWS |
| Bern Klatte | COE |

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|---|---|
| Robyn MacKay | BPA |
| Cathy Hlebechuk | COE |
| Paul Wagner | NOAAF |
| Tony Norris | USBR |
| Tim Heizenrater | Cascade Energy |
| Mike Deegan | COE |
| Ken Tiffan | USGS |
| Russ Kiefer | IDFG |
| Scott Bettin | BPA |
| Margaret Filardo | FPC |